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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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MARKETS FOR FISHERY PRODUCTS TO BE FAIRLY STEADY

Fairly steady markets for edible fishery products will prevail during the second quarter of 1954, according to the April-June issue of the Quarterly Outlook for Marketing Fishery Products, released today by the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior.

The report sets forth the prospective markets for individual fishery products and byproducts and describes conditions affecting these markets. Emphasis is placed on: (1) anticipation of heavy seasonal runs of commercially important fish; (2) forecasts on the menhaden catch as the season for this species gets under way; (3) evaluation of probable effects the Alaskan fishing curbs will have on this year's salmon pack; (4) predictions on effects of the 10-day post-season open period for halibut fishing in the North Pacific; and (5) consideration, for the first time in this publication, of prospective markets for fish solubles.

Imports, according to the report, will be heavier for canned items but relatively unchanged for other fishery products. Exports are expected to be light and to show no increase over the same quarter of 1953.

Supplies of fresh fishery products, the report states, will increase during the quarter as a number of seasonal fisheries reach peak production. Stocks of frozen fish and shellfish in cold storage will reach their annual low during April and May. These stocks are expected to show an increase, however, by the quarter's end.

Nearly 139 million pounds of frozen fishery products were in storage on February 28. This was 19 percent above the 1949-1953 average for this quarter and only 2 percent below the quantities on hand on March 1, 1953, when frozen product storage stocks reached an all-time high for that month.

Stocks of most varieties of canned fish will be low during this April-June period, the report points out, since the new pack will not become available until the third and fourth quarters. Prices for canned fish are expected to remain firm during this second quarter.

The general downward trend of fish and shellfish prices, which was evidenced in February, is expected to continue during the quarter as production increases. Wide fluctuations in the index for drawn, dressed, and whole fish are anticipated. The index for frozen processed fish should remain fairly steady while that for canned fish, because of the generally small stocks on hand, is expected to climb.

One of the chief factors contributing to general market stability is the spectacular current production and consumer acceptance of prepared products, notably, "fish sticks." The development of fish sticks originated in an initial output of about 100,000 pounds during January 1953, and production of this item has expanded steadily since that time. A recent survey indicates that last year's output came to more than 7½ million pounds and production for 1954 will probably exceed 30 million pounds. Other prepared fishery products, such as tuna pies, seafood dinners, and concentrated soups are gaining national distribution, according to the report, and a strong future for these items, too, is seen.

Copies of the report, designated as Fishery Leaflet 336t, are available without charge from the Division of Information, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington 25, D. C.

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